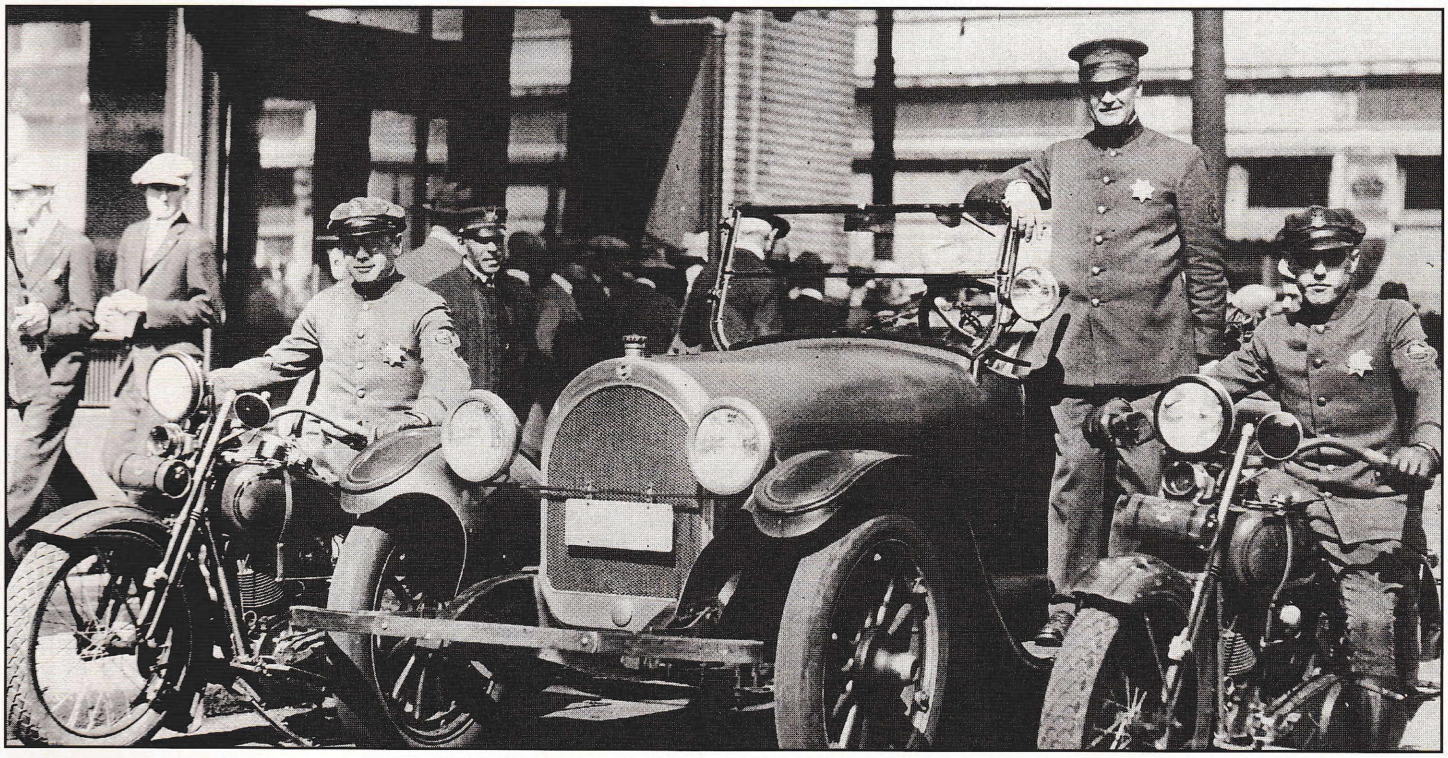
LODI HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Incorporated October 20, 1988

LODI HISTORIAN

VOLUME 10, NUMBER 2 SUMMER 1999

LODI LAW AND ORDER, PART 2

By Nancy Lea Schmer



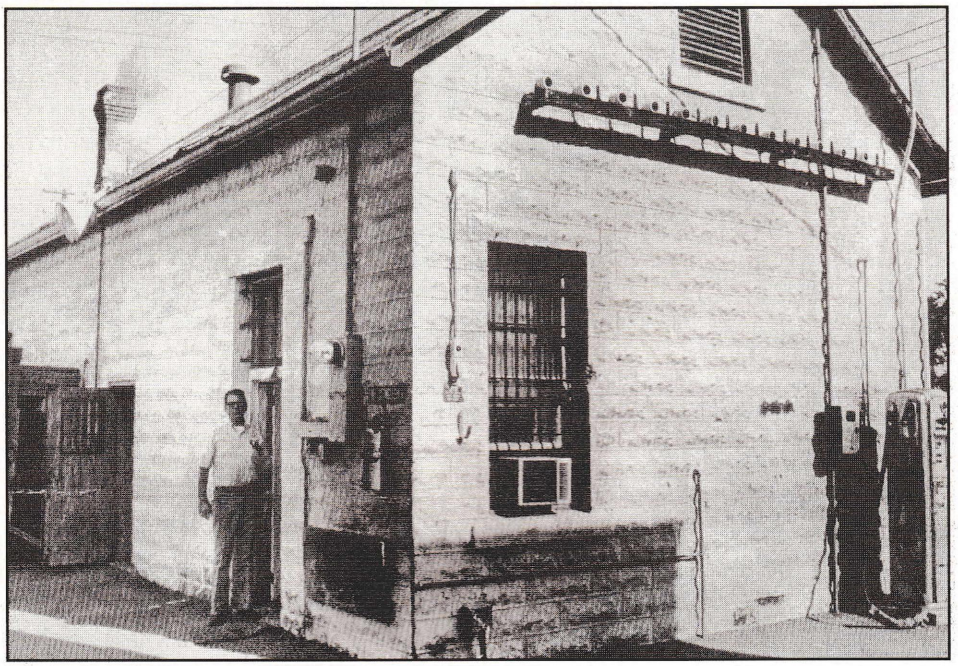
▲ *An impressive early motorized police unit, Stockton, California.*

1912

In January plans were being drawn to build the first city owned building at the site of the old water tank on Main Street, between Elm and Locust streets. Lodi's population was estimated at 3,000. Former Justice of the Peace George E. Lawrence was mayor. Current Justice of the Peace Frank Henning was also Acting City Recorder.

City Marshal Hannibal B. Coleman and Deputy Marshal William Burkholder were assisted by the local county constables. One such example occurred on January 6 when Constables Floyd and Mitchell happened to be nearby during an armed robbery at Elm and Sacramento streets. Two men pointed their pistol at a lunch wagon vendor and demanded his cash. When the vendor aimed back with his own pistol, the two robbers fled on foot. The constables gave chase and Mitchell fired his gun. One suspect stopped, the other got away. Later when Floyd was booking three hobos into jail he caught the earlier stickup man cutting out the bolt portion of the cell door. There were wood shavings on the floor and Floyd removed a razor from the man. The following week Constable Edward S. Floyd was praised for his shrewd work after the splendid capture of a Sacramento burglar.

Often, the same officer who investigated a crime would track down the suspect(s). One example took place when Lockeford Constable J.D. Parker tracked down six youths that committed a vile act several miles outside of Lodi. Parker made some of the arrests in Red Bluff. The final capture was in Gonzales, Monterey County. The 19-year old was greatly surprised that the officer had traced him to that remote place.



▲ *Lodi City Jail started housing prisoners in 1914.*

William H. Riecks, Sheriff 1911-1930. ▼
Photo courtesy of John Basalto

The Lyric Theatre on Sacramento Street was offering children's hour on Saturday afternoons to grammar school pupils. The cost of admission was one penny. Marshal Coleman was on hand during the performance to look after the safety of the children.

On March 14 a Lodi ordinance sounded the death knell for the 450 members of the Catawba Club, mostly boys who boozed after the saloons were closed. The manager, C.W. Walden, was arrested.

Lodi merchants declared a half-holiday on May 8 so that everyone, including clerks, could attend the Lockeford picnic. Attorney and former Justice of the Peace George M. Steele was orator of the day. Organizers failed to post that "rag dancing" was not permitted; accordingly some of the people from out of town started to dance the two-step in the one beat time and when the band played "Everybody's Doing It" the temptation became too strong for most. The ushers had made up their minds that there would be no "ragging" and each of the offending dancers was gently tapped on the shoulder and told to "cut it out." George M. Steele claimed that he did not know how to rag, but that he was just learning how when the lesson was suddenly terminated by one of the ushers. After similar offenses at Lodi's 4th of July celebration, the city trustees were petitioned to prohibit "rag dances." The trustees were of the opinion that the dances were immoral and should be prevented.

Citizens were concerned about crime. The Women's Home Mission thought the comic papers and movie pictures tended to corrupt the young. The Tokay Theatre was holding a gambling exposé, parents and teachers were invited. The Women's Christian Temperance Union stated they wanted a woman on the police force.

The new city hall at 114 North Main Street was completed in early July 1912. Marshal H.B. Coleman would remain on north Sacramento Street in an office rented for $8.00 a month from Mrs. Anna Sollars. The city did wallpaper his office for a cost of $3.50.

In the county, William H. Riecks was sheriff. Constable Floyd asked for an auto to perform his duties as the livery bills were $100.00 per month.

William H. Riecks was born near Vernalis on November 9, 1869 and grew up on his family's ranch. His parents, William H. and Rebecca (Von Bremen) were both born and reared in Germany, they settled in California prior to the Civil War. After his school days were over, the younger Riecks took up grain and stock farming on the home ranch. Riecks was married to Miss Sarah E. Prather. He had always been active in local politics and upon the death of former Sheriff Walter F. Sibley in June 1911 the board of supervisors offered the position to Riecks.

In August, city trustees purchased fourteen marshal badges at a cost of $1.00 each. T. Harry Myers was paid $17.50 for special police duties. Myers had been working for the city as night watchman for over a year. By November he was hired as Marshal Coleman's deputy at a salary of $75.00 a month. The city also paid $75.00 to former assemblyman, Judge Arthur E. Percival, for attorney fees. Legal services were obtained as needed from various local attorneys.

The Board of Trustees asked Marshal Coleman to arrest citizens who did not restrict their use of water during a fire. A weed commissioner was appointed to see to the eradication of weeds in vacant lots to diminish the potential of fires. Marshal Coleman and Fire Chief E.H. Stark ordered the Odd Fellows Lodge on the northwest corner of Sacramento and Elm streets to install a fire escape for the second floor as required by city ordinance.

Miscellaneous news in September included the trustees setting a curfew that any person under the age of 12 shall not loiter upon the public streets after 8:00 p.m. in the winter months

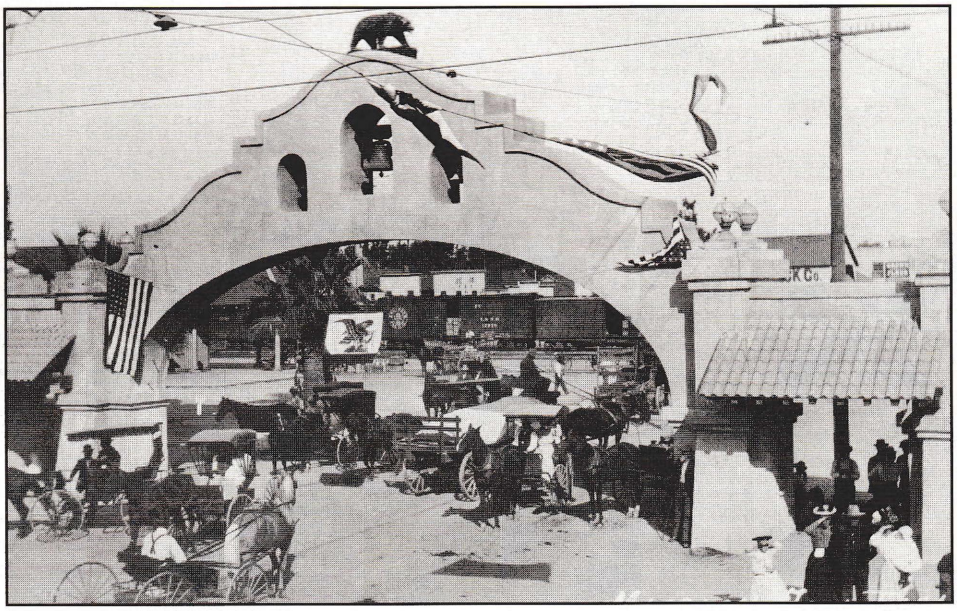
▲ *1912 traffic jam on Pine Street, between School and Sacramento streets.*

and after 9:00 p.m. during the summer months. Another ordinance prohibited indecent wearing of slit skirts, also no "x-ray" costumes.

Marshal Coleman, who also served as superintendent of streets, had started the downtown street work. Fire hydrants and trees had to be moved for the new pavement. One of the first paving attempts resulted in the sidewalk one foot above the street; vehicle passenger doors were unable to fully open. When the city could no longer afford the paving, property owners were asked to pay the $5.25 per running foot cost. Low tree limbs annoyed pedestrians as well as interfered with horses and vehicles, so a city ordinance restricted tree branches to be no less than eight feet above the sidewalk.

All traffic was regulated on the streets of Lodi. Bicycles, motorcycles, and automobiles were to keep to the right side of the roadway. Vehicles could not park for over an hour in one place or have a bell or horn that had an annoying sound. Also, you were not to travel in the wake of another vehicle (too close behind) and to supply your own catch basin if your auto was in the habit of leaking oil or gasoline. Drivers had to be 18 years of age or 16 with a permit. At this time there were 87,000 vehicles registered in California.

In December two mules were stolen from the Perrin brothers, local cement block contractors; three days later the mules were located in Linden.

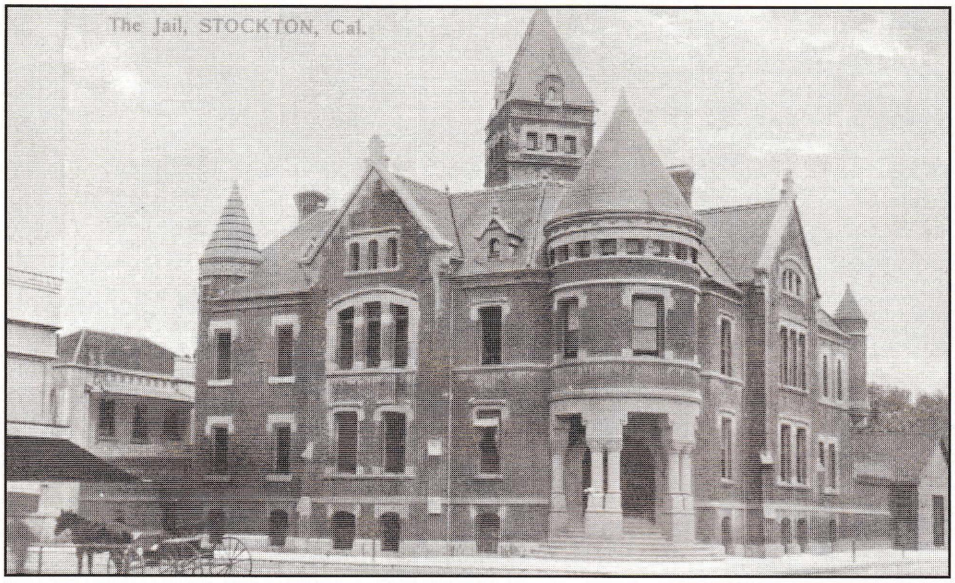


4th of July Celebration. ▲

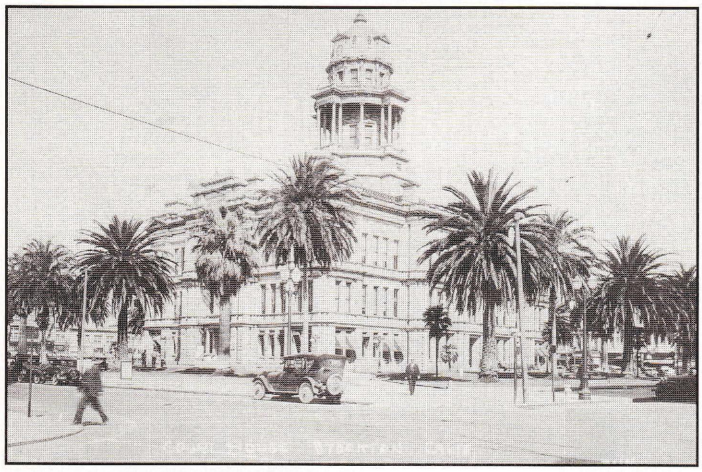
Lodi's jail facility was located in a county building on north Sacramento Street. In February 1913 Marshal Coleman began complaining of the overcrowded cells and unsanitary conditions at the Lodi jail, declaring "that conditions have grown so bad that I am almost ashamed to lock up a respectable man." Lodi trustees then began to consider a new location for a jail, finally settling on a 20' x 30' former transformer building the city owned at the rear of city hall on north Main Street. The structure was originally built for the Cary Brother's Water and Light Company.

Plans to turn the former substation into a modern prison were started in April. The Perrin brothers were hired to remodel the building they had originally built five years earlier. The proposed number of jail cells was reduced from four to three; the space that had been proposed as the fourth cell eventually became the booking room.

As late as December the jail committee was having problems, including the north wall of the building "that commenced to crumble." Workmen started tearing out the old wall the day before New Year's Eve, replacing it with the same hollow concrete blocks



▲ *After sentencing, Lodi's prisoners were sent to "Cunningham's Castle," the county jail in Stockton.*



▲ *Lodians traveled to the Stockton Courthouse to plead their traffic cases.*

that matched the rest of the building. After plastering, the interior was painted "institution green." The intention at one time was to set up an emergency hospital with movable cots in the large hallway, but the beds were never installed. Today the large wooden entry door and the cement block with "1908" set in it are in the Lodi Historical Society's collection.

It would be early 1914 before the first prisoner took up residence. The jail's operation was similar to other small town jails in that it was a place where offenders were kept just overnight until they saw the judge the next morning. However, if the wrongdoer had been picked up on a Friday night, he remained in jail over the weekend until Monday morning. After seeing the judge the violator was either freed, paid a fine, or was sent to Stockton to serve a term in the county jail. Women and juveniles were not incarcerated in the city jail, but were sent directly to Stockton and then returned to Lodi in the morning for sentencing.

The Finance Committee asked the city trustees for permission to close Sacramento Street for the 1913 Christmas party. The committee collected $91.20 that was spent on decorating, a Santa Claus, and candy. The trustees paid for the Christmas tree. The committee also wanted Marshal Coleman to appoint as many deputies as necessary to preserve order. There ended up being problems with too much noise from the crowd resulting in confusion. The committee decided that the following year they would require absolute quiet on the part of everyone present.

January 1914, Constable Floyd filed his year-end report for 1913. Floyd challenged any constable in the state to show as many arrests. A breakdown of the 309 arrests in the Elkhorn township included 81 drunks, 25 insane, and 61 sentenced to jail. The high was 55 arrests in February and the low was 12 in May. Floyd also performed a great deal of civil work.

Governor Johnson called Burton A. Towne to the newly created State Highway Commission. Towne already served on the County Highway Commission, appointed by the Board of Supervisors. A number of years later Towne resigned, citing too many duties to perform at his Woodbridge vineyard.

On January 1, 1916 Lodi's 3,500 residents received two inches of snow. A new law required all cars to have two headlights and taillights that illuminated 500 feet forward and 50 feet to the rear. Constable Floyd served as auctioneer at the Lyric Theatre on North Sacramento Street.

In July the F&M Bank opened in a one-room store in the opera house building. The only fixtures were a couple of desks and a round safe that was in the window. The idea of a strong box of that shape was that safe crackers could not dent it.

The constable in the town of Victor was J.E. Fitzsimons. In September 1916 he trailed robbers to their lair and secured the booty and confessions.

F.B. Nunn was appointed as poundman in January 1917. The city had gone without one for two years. Lodi also had water laws in force. There were two schedules, one for residents living north of Pine Street and the other for those living south of Pine Street. Poundmaster Nunn was to check for water wasters. Four years later, the city hired a water inspector to handle the water violations.

There were over 194,000 autos registered in California. Driver's licenses were not being required. When you paid your car license, you were to also send for a driving card.

Vehicle drivers were ignoring the state dimmer law. Cars were to dim or have their lights strike the ground within 75 feet. Also, there were car owners who persisted in hogging the few hitching posts left in town. Violators were fined $100.00. There was a letter to the editor of the Lodi newspaper asking the trustees to get Marshal Coleman some help.

The following month the car drivers were still parking in front of the

hitching posts. In addition, firemen warned horse and car owners not to stop in front of the fire hydrants. Marshal Coleman warned the train crews that they would be arrested if they blocked the railroad crossings for longer than five minutes.

Autoists were asked not to hog all the available space at the band concerts. Those attending were to park perpendicular to the sidewalk. Since the band enjoyed applause, hand clapping was suggested instead of the deafening auto horns.

In June 1917, 299 young Lodi men registered with the Army for the war with Germany (later known as WWI). The first enlistees were honored with a parade. Of the boys who enlisted, eight were in the National Guard, fifteen in the Navy Reserve, four in the Officers Reserve, four in the Naval Coast Patrol, and one in the Hospital Corp. The last week of June was the deadline for the young men to make their choice in the Army Services.

A number of German sympathizers had put up posters to hinder recruitment. In August an anti-draft meeting was held at Maple Hall. Two men in attendance refused to sign the draft form and were jailed; they called themselves "American Patriots, Inc." After spending the night in jail, the two men signed the draft papers. One of the men later failed the physical. Approximately one-sixth of all draftees were physically deficient.

Two weeks later, two more Lodi socialists were arrested on conspiracy against the draft law. A German reverend was indicted as a draft agitator. Several Lodi men who refused to fight for their country were sent to the Alcatraz Military Post.

No pro-German talk was allowed. A jury in the Sacramento Federal Court

Form 1204

CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Day Message	
Day Letter	Blue
Night Message	Nite
Night Letter	N L

If none of these three symbols appears after the check (number of words) this is a day message. Otherwise its character is indicated by the symbol appearing after the check.

WESTERN UNION

TELEGRAM 14

NEWCOMB CARLTON, PRESIDENT GEORGE W. E. ATKINS, FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Day Message	
Day Letter	Blue
Night Message	Nite
Night Letter	N L

If none of these three symbols appears after the check (number of words) this is a day message. Otherwise its character is indicated by the symbol appearing after the check.

RECEIVED AT 4 PINE STREET, LODI, CALIF.

16SF 0 51 BLUE 1 EXTRA COUNT DASH AND QN'S 1 EACH

STOCKTON CALIF 323PM JULY 11TH 1918

CONSTABLE
LODI CALIF

AUTOMOBILE STOLEN JULY 10 1918 MAXWELL

LICENSE 94764 SERIAL 202556 MOTOR A-8577

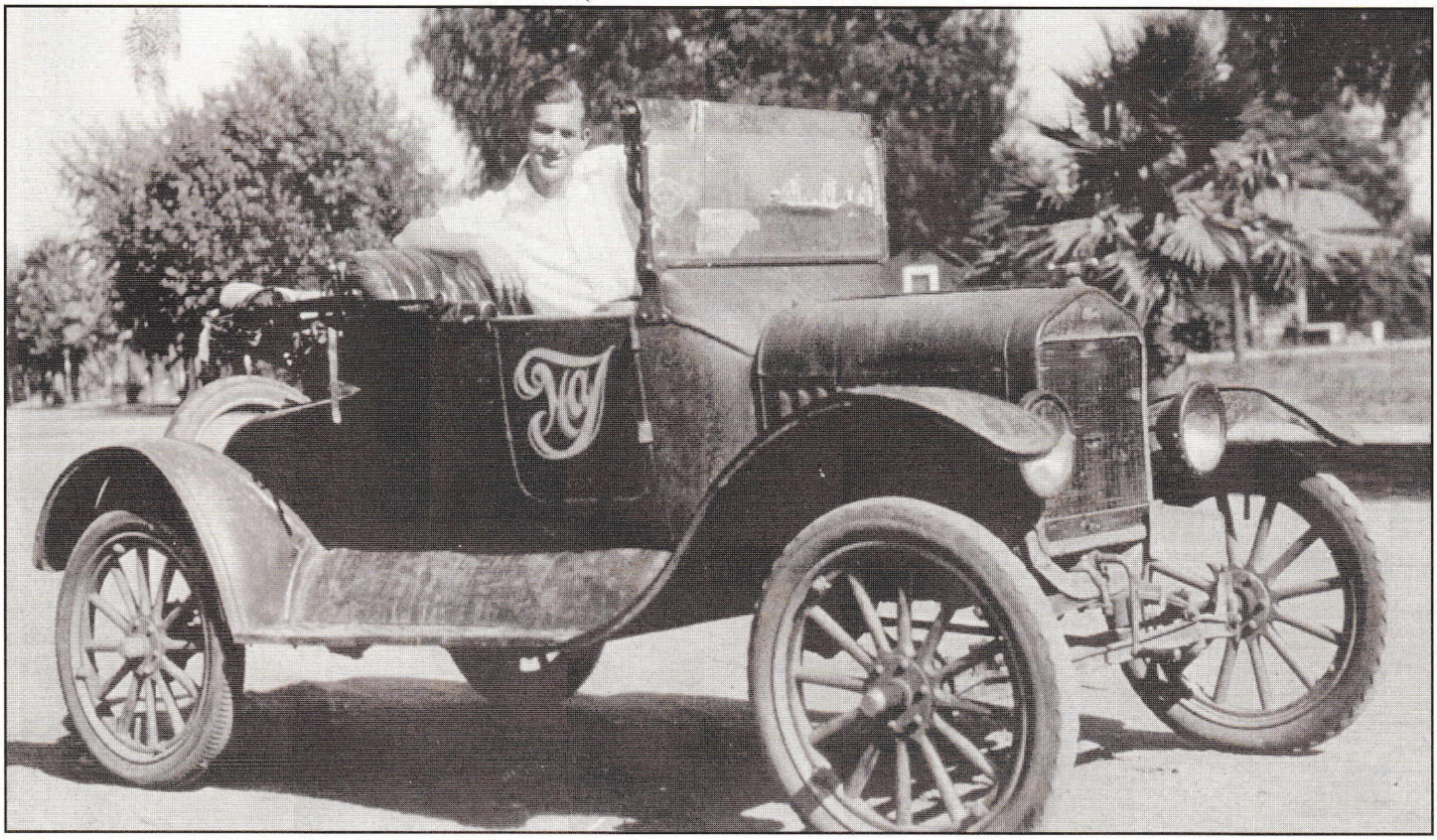
"TREDWAY BROS STATIONERY STOCKTON"

IN GOLD LETTERS PAINTED ON EACH FRONT DOOR

ARREST ANY-ONE IN POSSESSION AND WIRE ME

WM H RIECKS, SHERIFF

1918 telegram from San Joaquin County Sheriff Riecks. ▲



▲ *Henry Allen Thompson in his roadster, August 1923.*

convicted two Lodi women on disloyalty charges. They were sentenced to 40 days in jail and a $100.00 fine each.

A grocery store was charged with violating the wheat conservation rule. The government closed the store for one week as punishment. You were considered a traitor to the U.S. if you ate more than six pounds of wheat products in a month. Citizens were advised to eat beans instead.

Lodi soldiers began arriving home in March 1919. Lodi planned a huge celebration. Twenty-five firemen were appointed to act as temporary police to handle the crowds.

Several years later two Lodi brothers defaced a picture of President Wilson and were found guilty of a "most serious" breach of patriotism. The judge was an American Legion Major and 1,500 fellow Lodians served as jurors. The men were given 30 days to get out of town.

In October 1918 a flu epidemic was sweeping through the area. Public gatherings were cancelled. The local Board of Health ordered all to wear a mask or go to jail for 10 days and a $100.00 fine. Advisors said, "It is better to look ridiculous than dead." Months later as the epidemic wore on, county traffic officer Charles R. Fisher stated he would arrest every autoist in the city limits with an open muffler because it is especially annoying to the people who were hospitalized or ill at home.

In August 1920 Richard McClure was appointed city marshal and street superintendent, Hannibal B. Coleman had resigned. The police force consisted of three men, including Marshal McClure.

In 1921 there were over 16,000 vehicles registered in San Joaquin County. Two of them collided on Cherokee Lane, an Essex getting the better of a Buick. Anyone cited or arrested could expect to see his or her name in the local paper. Offenses from blocking a fire hydrant to spitting on the traction cars were published.

On February 8, 1921 four bandits robbed the Central California Traction train just outside of Lodi at the Dougherty Station. The engineer was flagged down by a man armed with a shotgun, three accomplices quickly appeared. Approximately 45 passengers were relieved of $400.00 and jewelry. Many of the victims succeeded in concealing their money and valuables. The young men got away in an auto. The traction line posted a $250.00 reward for the suspect's capture.

Gambling joints had been raided for years. At one time the district attorney received an anonymous letter stating that if he should attempt to close the gambling dives he would be assassinated. The letter claimed there was a $10,000 fund to carry out the bloody deed. The D.A. said he had no intention of changing his policy of

▲ *Marshal Fernando Christesen, his wife Ida and their grandson Jim Fitzsimmons, circa 1928.*

enforcing the laws in all districts alike.

Gambling raids were on the rise in 1921, the headlines in April announced:

"26 Gamesters caught in raid. Wong Lee paid all of the fines for the Lady Luck Gang"

"13 more nabbed"

"Chinese gambling Wan King caught in raid, pays $1,000.00 fine"

The gamblers knew the Lodi officers and would scatter when their lookouts saw them coming. County officers Hanson, Bert Acker, J.A. Priest, and Frank Thompson were enlisted. The house raided at Main and Elm streets netted 16 men. The county kept the $465.00 collected in fines because their men made the arrests.

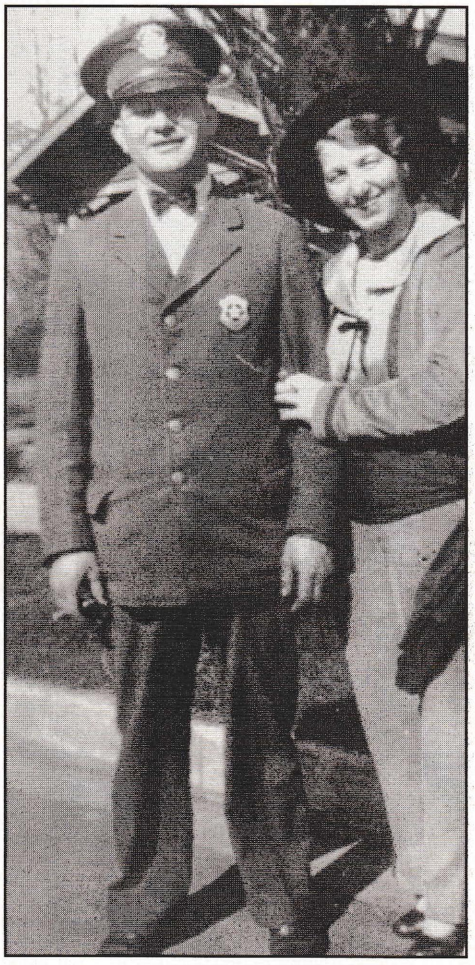
The following month Sheriff Riecks put a crimp in gambling at the Lockeford Picnic.

On May 21 with Deputy Marshal Reid and Constable Acker assisting, Marshal McClure arrested 22 gamblers, $750.00 in fines was paid.

Gambling raids continued almost monthly through the end of 1921. October was especially busy with 93 arrests. Bootlegging was also a problem. Police destroyed a still and mash on Cherokee Lane. During this six-month period, fines for gambling and bootlegging totaled $8,363.00.

The heat was turned up on motorists as well when state officers, assisted by Marshal McClure and his deputies, nabbed 65 motorists in one day on Cherokee Lane, near Locust Street.

▲ *Christesen family, front l to r: Marshal Fernando, son Leland "Jerry," wife Ida. Back row: daughters Edna and Madeline, circa 1925.* *Photo courtesy of Maxine Christesen*



▲ *Motorcycle officer W. Roy Kaufmann with Gertie Bauck in 1929.*

Marshal McClure and Constable Acker responded to a report of a husband "ginned up" and trying to shoot his family. They arrived to find the man leaving the scene in his vehicle. The officers said there was no use in trying to catch a fellow going "pell mell" through town. Meanwhile, 40-50 people had gathered in front of the man's house. The suspect returned, scented danger, and didn't stop. The officers dispersed the crowd and when the man returned, he was arrested over his wife's protests.

Speed officer Charles Fisher stayed busy catching traffic law violators. One unsuspecting motorist engaged Fisher in a race, when he paid his $30.00 fine he said, "I didn't know he was the speed cop until he arrested me."

Lodians complained when they had to start going to Stockton to plead their traffic cases. Officer Fisher said that he was only following the instructions of the district attorney, i.e., that Fisher had no business holding court on the road or allowing any of the cases to go, but to arrest every offender and let them thrash the matter out with the judge. If they chose to plead guilty, they could mail their fine and the matter would be considered settled. One man said he intended to plead guilty and pay his fine because the hydrant was there when he returned to his car, but he feels sure it was not there when he parked.

The newspaper even got into the act of checking for errant drivers. They posted a man at the corner of Sacramento Street and Lodi Avenue one Saturday at noon. In two minutes 60 cars had passed through the intersection. Thirteen were counted as cutting the corner or failing to give the signal to turn. The offending vehicle's license numbers were printed in the paper.

Police went into action and announced that they would clear the Lodi "jungles." At noon and 5:00 p.m. an officer would direct traffic at the busy intersection. Jail time was urged for speeders.

On April 15, 1922 Fernando Christesen replaced Richard McClure as city marshal and superintendent of streets.

Deputy marshals were John F. Reid and Florence Shealor.

Fernando Christesen was born March 30, 1874 in Franklin, California. His parents, Robert and Lena Christesen, farmed grain in Sacramento County. After Fernando turned eighteen years of age, he struck out for himself and tried various types of employment, including machinist for the Holt Manufacturing Company. He came to Lodi in 1901 and was engaged in farming, largely melons. Christesen married Miss Estelle "Ida" Powers in 1902 and they had three children, Madeline, Edna, and Leland. The family moved from their farm into town in 1920.

In 1923 Christesen received a raise for a monthly salary of $150.00 as marshal and $125.00 as superintendent of streets.

The San Joaquin County Supervisors enacted an ordinance to regulate dancing. The ordinance banned cheek to cheek shimmying, girls under 18 were not allowed in the dance hall without an escort, and dances were to end at 1:00 a.m. The law also did away with return privileges. Those found guilty faced a fine of up to $150.00 and/or 50 days in jail. Lodi went even further in banning endurance dancing. Marshal Christesen said "dancing fools" were trying to break a record.

▲ *Marshal Fernando Christesen (head turned), and motorcycle officer W. Roy Kaufman to the right, circa 1933.*

Gambling raids continued into 1923, Marshal Christesen stated that the gambling must stop. When the city trustees discussed the right to use slot machines in Lodi, Christesen argued against the proposal.

Justice of the Peace Solkmore held court in a county building on north Sacramento Street, he was a no-nonsense judge. There were two holding cells adjoining the courtroom that were used to hold prisoners awaiting removal to the jail in Stockton. Judge James Emmet Hopkins presided over police court.

John H. Solkmore was first elected justice of the peace ten years earlier. He was born in Tehama County in 1881 to John W. and Margaret (Evers) Solkmore. The family moved to Woodbridge in 1884. John H. attended the Woodbridge grammar school and graduated with the class of 1902 from Lodi High School. He taught school in Clements and on Union Island, later he was principal of Woodbridge and Houston schools. He studied law in the office of Judge Steele and was admitted to the bar in 1908.

In 1927 the Board of Trustees decided to place the city marshal and his deputies in uniform. Caps and badges were also approved. Plans were made to install telephone boxes for the officer's use. A new motorcycle officer, W. Roy Kaufmann, was hired. The city clerk was directed to obtain a siren for the new officer.

An ordinance was passed on September 4, 1928 separating the duties of the Chief of Police and the Superintendent of Streets. Marshal Christesen became the city's first "Chief of Police." By the following year, Chief Christesen received a salary of $200.00 a month. Additional compensation of $30.00 a month was paid for the use of his automobile.

Lodi had seen many changes. The horse and buggy had given way to the automobile. City officials had outgrown the first city hall on Main Street. The City Marshal was now Chief of Police and no longer handling the Superintendent of Streets duties. The Police Department was moving forward.

THE LODI HISTORIAN

is a quarterly publication of the Lodi Historical Society
P.O. Box 264, Lodi, CA 95241-0264

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